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## EXCURSION IN NORTH WALES.

[Continued from Page 160.]

WE found the *Hand*, at Llangollen, a tolerably decent inn; and, ordering a steak by way of luncheon, we strolled out towards some old monastic ruins in the neighbourhood. After walking about two miles, we reached Valle Crucis, another retired spot, magnificently adorned with bold and picturesque scenery. In a recess on one side, amidst a luxuriant grove of ash trees, the elegant ruins of Valle Crucis Abbey (called, by the Welsh, *Llan Egwestl*) disclosed their mouldering fragments to our sight. The most rigid anchorite,—even Hugh Bellot himself, austere as he was,—could not have selected a spot more completely secluded from the “busy hum of men,” than that in which this abbey is situated. Built at the very bottom of a deep dell, it is screened from view, till a person is close to it, by the high and well-wooded hills which rise around it; and there is something exceedingly tranquil and soothing in the scene which its decaying fragments exhibit. To judge from the architectural specimens which the Abbey still displays, it must have been a grand and magnificent pile. At the west end are the remains of a very beautifully ornamented arched door-way; above this are three lancet-shaped windows, and over them a circular one, with three divisions. A cloister on the south-side, which, a century ago, was merely a shell, is now a comfortable farm-house. The east end, from the style of its architecture, appears to have been erected at a later period than the rest of the building, and its long, narrow, pointed windows give it a very cumbrous and gloomy appearance. The dormitory is converted into a hay-loft, to which there is access by outside stairs of heavy masonry: it is supported by three rows of arches, on round pillars with ornamented capitals. The area of the church is too much crowded with ash trees to be seen to advantage; and the elegant window of the chapel is nearly quite concealed by the luxuriance of their foliage. A pleasing melancholy, however, pervades the whole,

the subject, with reference to an expression used in the poem. Under this impression we did not think it necessary to subjoin any remark of our own.—ED.

and creates an emotion infinitely more delightful than that which a more splendid and perfect structure might produce:—

Hail! mould'ring arches of yon reverend pile,  
That seem in age's hoary vest to shine:  
All hail! for here creative Fancy reads  
Of ages past the long forgotten deeds!

Valle Crucis, like Vanner, near Dolgellau, was a Cistercian monastery, and dedicated to St. Mary. It was founded, in 1200, by Madog ab Gruffydd, the potent Lord of Bromfield, and grandson of the famous Owain Gwynedd, Prince of Wales. It is said to have been the first Welsh abbey which was dissolved, and its dissolution happened in 1235, from which time to 1612 it remained in the crown, and was then granted by James the First to Edward Lord Wootten. Its revenues were estimated at nearly £200 per annum\*.

On our way back to the inn we turned aside to view the ruins of Dinas Bran Castle, situated on the summit of a lofty and very steep mountain, about a mile from Llangollen. It was a building of some magnitude, and, from its situation, must have possessed many important advantages. It is supposed to be one of the oldest fortresses in the Principality, but the precise period of its foundation is not known. It was the principal residence of the powerful Lords of Yale †, and

\* The revenue of this abbey, which was £188, was, after its dissolution, appropriated to the tythes of Llangollen and Wrexham. According to tradition, this celebrated building comprised originally several distinct chapels, governed by their separate priests, and so contrived that the service, performed in any one, never disturbed the devotional ceremonies of the rest. One of the chimnies in the dwelling-house, formed out of the ruins of the southern cloister, contains a relic of a sepulchral monument, on which is the following fragment of an inscription:—"Hic jacet—ARVRVI—." There is also another mutilated inscription in the circular window above mentioned, which has been thus deciphered:—"AD—ADAM—DNS—fecit hoc opus pace beata quiescat"—and underneath "M—D—." Miss Seward, in her beautiful poem on Llangollen Vale, thus happily describes the situation of this monastery.—ED.

—— "On the brink of Deva's wandering flood,  
Your rich arch glimmering through the tangled glade,  
Your gay hills towering o'er your night of wood,  
Deep in the vale's recesses as you stand,  
And, desolately great, the rising sigh command."

† The Lords of Yale were the descendants of Osborn Fitzgerald, Earl of Desmond, who followed Gruffydd ab Cynan from Ireland, whither he

might have been founded by one of them, In 1390 it was inhabited by Myvanwy Vychan, or Vaughan, a most beautiful female, and a descendant of the house of Tudyr Trevor. Her charms inspired more than one Child of Song, and the Bard Hywel ab Einion Llygliw addressed an ode of great sweetness to her; but, as it is to be found in Evans's "Specimens of Welsh Poetry," I shall not quote it\*.

The ruins of this old castle present an object wildly desolate. The obtrusive weeds which fill the court-yard, the ivy and moss which cover the fast-decaying wall, form a scene at once pleasing and melancholy, and lead the imagination back to the days of old, when this now shattered fortress echoed loudly to the shouts of mirth and revelry. And, in contemplating the contrast, we cannot but reflect upon the omnipotence of time, and the comparative nothingness and vanity of man's boasted attainments †.

By the time we regained the inn we had been absent nearly two hours; and, after having discussed our steak with some little celerity—occasioned, probably, by the length of our walk, and the keenness of the mountain-air—we prepared to proceed on our way to Corwen (10 miles distant), which we had fixed upon as our resting-place, till the coach should take us up, and convey us towards Caernarvon ‡.

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It was late before we reached Corwen, which is an insignificant village, but rather romantically situated at the foot of the

had retired to avoid the troubles which agitated Wales in the 11th century.—[The tradition, that this castle was ever the residence of the Lords of Iâl, wants confirmation.—ED.]

\* The original poem is preserved in the *Archæology of Wales*, vol. i. p. 512.—ED.

† There are several vague traditions as to the foundation of this ancient fortress, and one of them, without much reason, ascribing it to the Gallic chieftain, Brennus, or Brân. The style of its architecture, however, as far as it can be traced through the present ruins, evidently belongs to the Britons; but the period of its erection is involved in obscurity, as is also that of its demolition. A brook, in the neighbourhood, bears the name of Nant Brân, which, no doubt, is derived from the same origin as that of the castle itself. The name of Brân was common to several British chieftains of ancient times.—ED.

‡ The part, which immediately follows in the M.S., has already appeared in the *CAMBRO-BRITON*, under the title of an "Extract from a Manuscript Tour."—[See vol. ii. p. 448.—ED.]

Berwyn mountains. As we approached the inn we perceived two or three horses in the yard munching their corn, and seemingly just arrived from a journey. Sounds of hearty glee and conviviality issued also from the house, and two or three of the *femmes de cabaret* were hurrying to and fro, busily engaged in preparing for the entertainment of guests. We were somewhat fearful, from these signs, that the apartments of the inn, which is, by no means, large, were occupied for the night; and, as we had no great inclination to extend our peregrinations any farther that evening, we beheld these busy preparations with no great complacency. To ascertain, however, how matters stood, we entered the house, and learnt that we might have two very good beds and a sitting-room to ourselves if we wished, but that a party of gentlemen were just going to supper, and, most probably, would have no objection to our joining them. Both my friend and I are naturally of a social disposition, and the latter proposal was, by far, the most congenial to us. I, therefore, wrote on a card—"Two gentlemen from England, ramblers through Wales, would be particularly gratified by being admitted into your society for the evening;" and the landlord, Mr. Clark, immediately carried the note to the party in the parlour—

Alone he went—alone he came not on:—  
a fine and hearty-looking young man accompanied him, and accosted us with much cordiality. "Gentlemen," he said, "my companions will be all very glad of your company. Had we known that you were in the inn, we should before this have petitioned you to add to the glee of our little party; but we had no idea that there were any English strangers at this time of the year at Corwen. Come, let me introduce you to my companions."—He opened the door of an adjoining room, as he spoke, and ushered us into the presence of a most goodly company. Round a table in the middle of the apartment were ranged seven or eight gentlemen in the most merry humour imaginable. A quantity of fishing-tackle, deposited in various parts of the room, indicated the manner in which the party had been occupied during the day: and we have since learnt, that these convivial meetings are by no means infrequent at Corwen, as the Dee in the neighbourhood affords the angler excellent sport. The ceremony of introduction was soon over,

and we sat down at the table, altogether unknowing and unknown. But we felt none of that awkward restraint, which a person usually experiences when he is conscious of having intruded upon the privacy of others; because we were convinced from the manner of all present, that we were heartily welcome, and that reserve would have been but a sorry return for so much free and warm-hearted suavity. Nay, we soon found, that it was the chief delight of the Welshmen to render us all those little nameless civilities, which are so gratifying to a stranger, and which—more than the most pompous and elaborate courtesy—impress him with a favourable opinion of the kindness and hospitality of his entertainers. There was a total absence of that frigid formality, which is always repulsive, and which, in most instances, indicates a lamentable narrowness of mind\*; but there was abundance of that genial and attractive harmony, which is often to be found among the inhabitants of a secluded but civilized country. Our repast was excellent. Some very delicious salmon and trout from the Dee, with some prime mutton from the mountains, and some of the best fowls I ever tasted,—washed down withal with no stinted allowance of capital sherry,—was fare not to be slighted by two tired, and, we will add, hungry travellers. But it was the charming spirit of good humour and conviviality, which cast so radiant a lustre over the whole. Never did I spend a happier evening than that which I passed so pleasantly at Corwen; and it was with no trifling regret that we bade adieu to these social Cambro-Britons, when they mounted their horses to return home. What part my friend and I played in the occurrences of that memorable evening, it becomes not me to relate; but I will record the flattering farewell of the young man, who first introduced us to the company—"Thank you, gentlemen!" he exclaimed, as he shook us warmly by the hand, "thank you for one of the pleasantest evenings I

\* A highly esteemed friend of mine, who has travelled a great deal, says, that there are but two methods of treating those stiff, supercilious fops, which are to be met with in all parts of the kingdom,—either to out-fop them, or to treat them with downright boorishness. He has generally found the first plan most efficacious; for nothing vexes your superlative fine gentlemen more than a greater and more preposterous display of affectation. I mention this for the benefit of my rambling readers.—*Verbum sapientibus.*

have ever spent. I am sorry you go to Caernarvon. If you will alter your intention and sojourn with me at Llangollen for a week or two, you will contribute greatly to the pleasure of an old lady and her son, who will do their utmost to render your visit agreeable—can I prevail?" I replied, that a previous engagement with a friend at Caernarvon prevented us from accepting an invitation so gratifying; but, should we find time to stop at Llangollen on our return, we would most assuredly call upon him. "Well, I hope for the best," said he, as he mounted his horse; and, again shaking us by the hand, he bade us farewell—enjoined us to remember our promise—rode on, and we saw him no more!

How often do those persons, who are accustomed to travel through a secluded country, fall in, during their wanderings, with some bright ethereal spirit by far too beautiful to dwell amidst the rude but honest rustics around him! And how radiant do the attributes of such a spirit appear by being contrasted with the simple and homely qualities of the neighbouring peasantry! In this light did we view the young Welshman, whom we met at Corwen, and, although we saw him no more after the pleasant evening which we spent there, yet have I often thought of him in my idle hours of meditation, as one who might do noble things were his strong and ardent spirit withdrawn from its seclusion. There was that in his open brow, and expressive features, which told that he inherited a benevolent sensibility, and a grand nobleness of soul. I never remember to have met with a stranger, for whom I felt a more intense degree of interest, than I did for this young and warm-hearted mountaineer; and it was with no little sorrow that we quitted the Principality without once more seeing him. But an unforeseen occurrence hastened our return to London; so that we were constrained to forego the pleasure we had anticipated from spending a few days at Llangollen.

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[*To be continued.*]

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## WELSH TRANSLATIONS.

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IN giving a place in our pages to the following letter, we are fully sensible of the tender ground on which we are about